

Nov 3, 1967

DR. ELLSBERG: Bill has asked me to speak, fill a gap here, on the question of the military side of the war in South Vietnam, the ground force fighting, and I'd expected that to be a rather gloomy morning such as is usually involved when I talk on Vietnam. I've gotten something of a reputation of a rather somber speaker on the subject since I came back, and so I was delighted when I woke up this morning, because really my spirits were very cheered up which is rather unusual. I've been trying to preserve this mood through the serious talk we've heard, but I'd like to communicate it to you. I read Joe Alsop this morning and, of course, that is a good way to start these days usually, which wasn't always the case. Back when I was with RAND, as Bill remembers, he and I were working then on a problem that Joe Alsop was also working on; in those days our joint obsession was the missile problem that you were hearing about yesterday, the strategic problems of general nuclear war. So at RAND we all kept ourselves going with the feeling that we had a responsibility for trying to stave off a missile attack that was scheduled, this was in 1958, that was scheduled for 1959 or 1960. And in those days you just couldn't read Joe Alsop before breakfast. It was really different then. It just wasn't worth getting out of bed if you read him on an empty stomach then. But now, a friend of mine in the Pentagon, a Colonel whose job, again like Joe's is to try to interpret Communist strategy in Vietnam, refers to the column as "Keep Smiling with Joe Alsop." And today I woke up and read this headline that really did put me in a very good mood for the day, which was: "The Real Story Behind the Attack is that Foe was Desperate," says Joe Alsop. Before reading on to discover which of the week's attacks he was referring to, that really brought back memories of just a year ago this week, because I thought he was referring to the mortaring during the Independence Day celebration. [REDACTED]

A year ago I was sleeping late in Saigon because it was a holiday. It was a celebration of the death of the President of the first Republic there, Diem. You know, the Viet Cong, to my knowledge, don't celebrate deaths of any of their former bodies. They celebrate Ho's birthday,

and they celebrate it by striving to launch nationwide attacks, if possible. Well, while waiting for the parade on this day, which is the way the South Vietnamese tend to celebrate these occasions, there was the usual B-52 bombing outside of town which shuddered the windows a little bit earlier in the morning, and later there was an unscheduled explosion that was much sharper, which I thought was a building going up or something. This was wrong. Later it turned out that they had dropped 75 mm recoilless rounds right in front of the reviewing stand for this parade. And apparently, just beautifully, right in front. Those of us who had become fans of VC technique during this time were going around saying, 75 recoilless! That meant they were not firing a flat trajectory. That means they were firing a 75mm recoilless on a high trajectory and dropping it right on a dime. People were going around saying, Can this be done? And military men were saying, No, no, it can't be done. Everyone was saying, Boy, these guys were great! As usual, one more proof of it. And then Westmoreland came out later in the day and said this was an act of desperation by the VC.

There were no casualties from this attack a year ago, because if I remember correctly, they fired an hour early, before the parade went by. And there were theories at the time, serious theories, that this was because guerrillas in that area operated on Hanoi time, which was an hour different. They didn't have daylight saving or something. A mistake based on a time difference, by the way, was a factor in both the Bay of Pigs attack, affecting our air cover, and in the Tonkin Gulf episode. So this works on both sides. But anyway, I take it that during the year the signals from Hanoi, from the Lao Dong Headquarters, were filled with time checks, and they had been rehearsing this timing problem all year, nervously: "Is it now?" and so forth. Meanwhile, their aim had been allowed to decay, and this year, while they did get these mortars in, I take it, right on time, they were 150 yards off, away from Humphrey.

I have a suspicion that Westmoreland was braced for this year's Act of Desperation (that could be a new MACV category of incident, like sabotage or assassinations) because I read one of the stories

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that commented that the only man who didn't move a muscle when the explosions went off was Westmoreland. The other piece of evidence is that he identified the explosion to the audience as "75 recoilless," obviously thinking of last year's act of desperation.

Well, as I read the story, it turned out Alsop was not talking about the mortaring after all, but about the category that Bill had asked me to concentrate on, which was large unit operations. And his ^{story} stay was particularly relevant to this group because it was a complaint about the reporting, both newspaper and television reporting. He says, "Nothing like a true picture of the war in Vietnam is coming through. One leaves from Vietnam, really bewildered by the defeatism that seems to prevail at home. There is no stalemate here. Westmoreland has at last the other side over a barrel." Now, he then devotes his column, as evidence for this remark, to an interpretation of what's going on there, which really may very well serve as the theme for what I want to talk about today.

The Red attack, which proves that the foe is desperate, is one that took place within the last week -- probably some of you remember this better than I -- when a U.S. unit ran into a whole regiment of the enemy's 9th VC Division. Alsop described it as "a minor unit of the admirable U.S. 1st Division." I think the word he's groping for there is "battalion," is that right? He is talking about the case in which the lead company in Terry Allen's battalion ran into a fixed position; and if I recall the casualties, it was something like 40 killed, including the battalion commander and 80 or 100 or so wounded, is that about right? In other words, the company was essentially annihilated. He says, "The meeting surprised our men, and the losses of the American unit were fairly heavy."

The word "meeting" is an interesting one there. I have been told that the word "ambush" is absolutely taboo in MACV and in Saigon, and what we have are "meeting engagements," generally. In this case, according to other accounts, what we had was a meeting between our men who were walking down a trail and the VC who were strapped into bamboo trees along the trail. To say that the meeting "surprised our men" raises the question, was the other side equally surprised?

The engagement received, and this is his complaint, received the fullest front page coverage, plus the usual "hyped-up coverage" by the television people. [This is a reference to a comment by an earlier speaker.] He says as far as the American public was concerned, the story ended there. It did not end there by any means. To begin with, there was the remarkable basic reason for the surprise of the American unit by the enemy unit, to be specific, by the 21st Regiment of the VC Division, 9th Division." Well, what was the reason for this surprise? Was it related to the fact that Alsop in his column of one week earlier had announced the following, which was the basis of his bafflement at people's worry about stalemate? "Every observable sign, in both the field and the documents, points to an important conclusion about the 'big unit war' as it is called here. This first phase of the war, which has endured since the American intervention, has in fact come to an end. The reason is that the North Vietnamese cannot pay the immense manpower bill for supporting," etc., etc. He said that does not mean there will be no more big units; he said there will be some sort of big units, perhaps battalions instead of regiments and divisions. So one week later -- one can see why the American public gets mixed up about this -- we have an Alsop column describing this attack by a full Vietnamese regiment.

On the other hand, that probably was not the reason for the surprise, because he had mentioned that the 9th Division, specifically, might be kept in being, as more or less a symbolic thing. This was a unit of the 9th. "The basic reason for the surprise was that the Twenty-first Regiment turned up where it had no business to be," -- there's a tone of petulance, I might say, right through this whole column -- "far from its allotted base in the remote depths of war zone D." (This suggests Alsop shares with less experienced civilians a belief that this war is being fought on really tight rules for both sides). At any rate, the reason that they had moved was the reassuring thing about this.

A letter that they found from the Regimental Political Officer revealed that the 21st Regiment had been driven to move out from its

base toward the more populated areas because its men were approaching starvation on a diet of little but rice gruel. So the "reassuring" aspect of what would appear to be the annihilation of an American unit in an ambush, presumably in an area where the American unit had "every right to be" is that they were annihilated by a group that was starving on a diet of little but rice gruel. "Such was then the condition of the first regiment of a division that used to be the proudest, toughest, the most celebrated of all the larger VC units in the whole of South Vietnam.

Now, what has happened to the rest of the division is equally reassuring. The division's second regiment, the 272nd, was already in such bad shape eight or ten months ago that it had to be pulled out of the line for rear unit duty. More recently, this 272nd Regiment was returned to the 9th VC Division. But hard intelligence has recently revealed that it has been given a food production role, meaning that this regiment is wholly engaged in jungle farming for reasons that can be deduced from the surprise move of the 271st Regiment. As to the division's third regiment, the 273rd, it has been in the news very recently as a result of an obstinate but wholly unsuccessful attack -- more petulance here I would say -- on the Special Forces Camp at Loc Ninh, near the Cambodian border, and they have failed disastrously to take this unit. In addition, the 273rd lost something like a quarter of its effectives in this fighting. He says the fact that they failed disastrously is something that really offers food for thought. Well, this point of his that the 272nd had formally been destroyed but was now back in action is, of course, also food for thought: e.g., about when the 273rd will next be seen. But it would appear that the 273rd has not yet vanished from the scene because on the front page of this same paper there is another headline, REDS BEATEN BACK AGAIN AT LOC NINH. (Incidentally, he complains that the New York Times tends to put everything in terms of U.S. defeats. He couldn't complain about this headline in the Post which refrained from saying REDS ATTACK AGAIN AT LOC NINH.) But for the fourth day this unit was attacking here: this is the 273rd.

As I read the story, I notice here the Communists lost 463 men killed in trying to take Loc Ninh. Let's take up this point of body count a little bit. The only enemy soldier to penetrate the barbed wire was a Vietnamese armed with a flame thrower. He was shot down. So we have this picture of people behind barbed wire for four straight days of attacks, but they have counted 463 bodies outside the wire. It reminds me of the line in "Henry V," you remember, the night before the Battle of Agincourt when one of the French Dukes comes into the tent and says, "The English camp is 463 paces from ours." One of the others turns to him and says, "Who hath measured the ground?"

Anyway, as I read on I see, "The enemy has used elements of the Viet Cong's 272nd and 273rd Regiments." 272nd? Now, that's our missing food control regiment, the one that Alsop reports today as "wholly engaged in finger farming." So now we have all the three regiments of the 9th Division accounted for. As he says, "The true pattern and trend of the war are in fact rather accurately indicated by the foregoing summary of the state of the 9th Division," which he had summarized earlier. ■ "The fact that the proudest, toughest, and most celebrated VC division is now in quasi-ruins has not even been mentioned before these words were written." No, like it wasn't mentioned the week before by Joe Alsop, when he mentioned that it was going to be kept in being. In the succeeding week, we have two of the regiments attacking Loc Ninh now for the fourth successive day in attacks which are described as 4,000 men attacks, a week after there shouldn't be any more regimental actions, and the other regiment involved in what would appear to be a very successful ambush of an American unit. What is the pattern that Joe Alsop sees in all this? I'm afraid I'm one of those readers, at this point, that he's complaining about, who has an attitude of some pessimism about the situation. But what he sees is "In military terms as well as in political terms the American and Allied efforts are at last beginning to pay off." X

There are several theories of what the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese may be up to with their main force units and with their military effort as a whole, and we have various alternative strategies

which we might use. The choice among them, and the expectations one has of success, is going to depend on what you think the VC are up to. Alsop has been expressing now for some time, on one hand, an interpretation of what the Communists think they are up to and, on the other hand, a description of what our forces are up to and what they're likely to do. And it does lead him, if you accept the premises, to an optimistic conclusions, although, of course, the events that he is describing here cannot possibly lead you, I would say, to optimistic inferences, and it is his attempt to read them that way that really is a rather desperate act.

The theory is that the purpose of those main force units and North Vietnamese units is to accomplish a decisive tactical defeat of a U.S. unit. (I would think they would not be unhappy, in those terms, by the way, with what happened to Terry Allen's battalion on a small scale.) But looking at things like Con Thien, and I believe many of our military people, draws the notion that they are desperately pinning everything on achieving a decisive annihilation of an American unit, which will have the effect on American politics and psychology of the Dien Bien Phu case, even if it is on a smaller scale. He draws encouragement from the fact that they have clearly, on the whole, been denied this kind of tactical success, they have had nothing like really for a long time -- in fact, no real battles -- and the fact that they're denied something that they're pinning their hopes on would lead you to hope that they have been switched to a pessimistic frame of mind which will be reflected operationally in defections, in morale, in performance and ultimately in willingness to negotiate on favorable terms. There is one other aspect of the theory, which is that by not only denying them this kind of success by our search and destroy operations and our blocking operations by our big units, but by attriting them, by destroying large units in the fashion that he described, this will have a direct effect on the problem of pacification. The conclusion that he says is derived from tons and tons of documents is that the VC base, its instruments of control, cannot long survive without the active, fairly

close-in support of the big units, the enemy's main force divisions, regiments and battalions, which are now chiefly North Vietnamese in three-fourths of the country. He then says every other observable sign is that the big unit war is over, that these big units have been neutralized. From these two premises then, obviously, he derives what you could call the withering away of the VC state. He predicts that the VC population control will unravel, a word that began to be used about a year ago in Vietnam. He emphasizes that if you remove the umbrella of the big units, these other forces will die on the vine in some sense because they need the support. I simply know of no support whatsoever for this first premise -- certainly nothing that I learned or saw in Vietnam or read on this subject suggests to me what his reasoning can possibly be in this respect. The notion that the smaller unit, the some 200 separate battalions, let's say, the some 50 separate platoons, talking about what they call local forces that operate in company and battalion size -- I simply know of no rationale by which one would argue that their performance, their survival, their capability to operate, to gain intelligence, to act effectively, depends in any significant way on those big units. The reverse is certainly a different story, the big units do depend in very many ways on the lower units and on the guerrillas. It is time that the big units do serve, not only to inspire the lower units with hope of ultimate victory in various forms (and their mere presence and existence does that, apart from operation), and of course, their ability to draw away U.S. units away from those local forces, or draw ARVN units away, does have an effect upon our allocation of forces which limits the forces that can be brought to bear against these local guerrilla forces. Now, in that respect, it is not obvious at all that they can be described as failing. There is no question that that is very much an explicit goal of their forces stated by Giap and stated by the VC; and, indeed, Giap, I am told by my colonel friend who has followed this more closely than I and has showed me the documents, Giap does not appear to have emphasized the Dien Bien Phu case in South Vietnam at all in terms of a big tactical victory being a decisive thing. He has constantly

talked in terms of a protracted conflict, a wearing-away conflict emphasizing guerrilla forces, and he interprets the Dien Bien Phu concept in that quite transformed fashion, in terms of a psychological effect causing the Americans to devote great resources and to lose men with a disproportionately low effect; this is a "slow Dien Bien Phu." In other words, the hope that Alsop drew recently from the recent speech by Giap was based on the notion that this represented a shift in Vietnam strategy and away from a decisive confrontation, a decisive tactical success, a shift based presumably upon our successes.

Now there may be such a shift, or there may not be, within the VC balance of bureaucratic power, but it can clearly be demonstrated that Giap has never held the earlier view explicitly and what he was saying recently was what he had been saying all along.

As in the war against the French, Giap is espousing a strategy now where the main units, not only by their existence by their deployment and their employment, are used strategically, looking at the country as a whole, to draw away forces -- U.S. forces in particular, which he emphasizes much more than the ARVN forces -- from pressure on the guerrillas. And this is something that he did very successfully against the French; it is a sophisticated strategy requiring a good deal of coordinated action for the country as a whole on the main unit level.

The Communists have always placed a great deal of emphasis on what they call strategic mobility, that they oppose to the kind of mobility that the U.S. has, represented by choppers and by armed vehicles, and so forth. It's a non-obvious use of the word mobility because they interpret it in the following two fashions, as I understand it. One thing that he says gives them their mobility, not vehicles, is the dependence of the main force units upon local guerrilla forces, i.e., their ability to rely on them. Rather than having within a given regiment, let's say, a main force regiment, a totally developed intelligence file that would enable them to move about easily and fight here and there -- something that's very difficult for any unit -- rather

than having to carry all their supplies or ammunition, rather than having to carry laborers with them: a main force regiment can move on foot at night a significant distance, let's say 20 miles, or they can move several nights or days through the jungle, resting under cover, cared for on the way not with food that they had to take with them but food that's supplied for them locally by the guerrillas that are there. They find when they arrive at the scene of the action that their preparation for the attack is supplied for them in a great variety of ways by local guerrillas. These include: regular forces, but which operate more in a given province or a given district; guerrillas which operate in squads of platoons, at the village level or hamlet level; and then another category which is only now getting full attention from our intelligence people and being included in estimates, and that is militia or irregulars.

Along with the help of all these local people who are on the scene when the main force unit arrives, if it came from a neighboring province or a couple of provinces away, it has guides to take it directly to the entrenched position. To give an interesting example, in November of 1965, when an ARVN regiment was virtually destroyed in the Michelin plantation north of Saigon, in Binh Duong, it turned out afterwards (we got full details from defectors on the way the thing had worked) this main force unit had arrived dog-trotting at night from some fair distance away. As it approached the area it was supplied with guides, local guides; all the information, all the intelligence, had been gathered before they arrived on the precise location and tactics of the entrenched ARVN unit -- not "entrenched", sleeping unit -- its tactical habits, which were no surprise, the fact that there were no guards out, the exact location of the Americans in the unit and of the battalion commanders and the regimental commander. The VC came into the area and were heard to say, in Vietnamese, directions for getting to the advisors, "get the American advisor in this area." They arrived, their blocking force occupied trenches that had been dug for them by the men and women of that area, and they moved in at night with the help of pre-laid tapes into assigned areas.

Now remember, all of this is done by people who didn't count in the main force unit. Undoubtedly, the biggest defeat of any ARVN unit in the war was this destruction of a regiment of the ARVN Fifth Division. The main force unit was able to do that, fast, by virtue of the fact they didn't have to get there two weeks in advance and do all this preparation, it was done for them. In this way, and in lots of other ways, in terms of information, intelligence, carrying supplies, providing intelligence, the lower units are almost essential to the operation of the main force units in an environment, remember, where they have great disadvantages, an environment where they have no air and no artillery, except for the occasional 75mm recoilless rifle. That is one aspect of the strategic mobility that they rely on. The other one has to do with the ability of these larger units themselves to use important aspects of guerrilla tactics, to be unfindable for considerable periods but to exist in small units, spread through an area. You may remember the analogy that T. E. Lawrence used about the Arabs in his guerrilla operations, the Arabs "will operate like a gas, everywhere and nowhere." In this case it is interesting to think of it as a gas through which our main force units cut, without finding anything, but which can coalesce fairly rapidly, here or there. Really, different VC units are involved, but it has the equivalent effect of mobility in the sense that they can switch the force of their large unit attack quite abruptly from one area of the country to another, just as if they were able to pick up a unit and move it by chopper from here to there. In a sense, the unit wasn't there yesterday, it was dispersed, but it comes together during the night and operates as a large unit.

These two things together are basically what Giap calls his strategic mobility which he says will beat the chopper-borne, road-bound mobility of the U.S. and ARVN forces.

From this account you can quickly see what I was describing earlier as a dependence of the main force unit upon these other elements of the VC. And these guerrilla forces can survive by dispersal, by hiding among the population, by getting out of sight -- and they

have shown their ability to do this -- they're not standing and fighting, they're not holding ground, they don't rely for survival on big units to come and pat them on the back or reinforce them or anything else. The argument that I'm making would directly dispute Alsop's conclusion that if the big units were destroyed, that would lead to the withering away of the VC guerrilla forces. I know of no reason to anticipate that.

Now, how about the second premise, that the big units have been dispersed? After all, just a year ago we were all saying what Alsop is saying here: the big unit war has ended. I was concerned in those days very largely with the small unit war, the pacification aspect, which I felt was going very badly or wasn't happening at all, but I wasn't disposed to dispute the fact that the big unit war was pretty well in hand. I certainly was prepared to dispute that that in itself solved the small unit war. That, I felt, lay ahead of us.

In the subsequent year, then, what have we found? We have had to end, to defeat, their big unit operations once again. Are they over? Jokes aside, the week's events cannot be reassuring on that point. It appears we threw 5,000 men into that special forces camp -- 5,000 men who came from somewhere, I don't know where, but they are not fighting guerrillas this week. And it is very hard to destroy the guerrillas, or infrastructure, in a population when the units assigned to protect that population pursue and disorganize these guerrillas occasionally go away for a week, because that's all the time that is needed for those units to come into town and to do whatever they want to do.

Alsop talks a great deal about the air cavalry who obviously have done an effective technical military job in their area. But as another colonel friend of mine, who was an officer in the air cavalry and just recently returned, said: "Well, there are two ways of looking at it," when I asked him specifically about the Alsop account -- the assertion that they were keeping a VC division in Binh Dinh effectively neutralized, or tied down. "Either we are keeping them pinned down or they are keeping us pinned down." And it is true that

the air cavalry has been in no position to leave the area where it has been operating. If it did, the result could be well anticipated, and the result would not be a demonstration that the guerrilla forces in that area had withered away because of the neutralization of the large unit. Again, he refers to Binh Dinh province as an area of success. Perhaps it is.

It is almost the only one that we have been used to pointing to; but as much as a month or two earlier he certainly would have included one other area, the adjacent province of Phu Yin. It is not included any more, because Phu Yin has pretty much fallen apart, and the enemy has been accomplishing offensive successes there which have pretty well knocked out the pacification gains that we have been hoping for. The next province north is Quang Ngai, where MACV a few months ago announced that really stunning improvements had been made, it was essentially cleared by the 173rd Airborne, and a month later MACV revealed that the VC had occupied for ten days the main pacification area.... Even on the big unit war I think that one can account to some extent for the public's attitude by the fact that we keep meeting these destroyed divisions again and again. To say that to emphasize the losses here and there and not to talk about victories elsewhere is biased -- as the administration does -- I think is one way of looking at it, and the other way is that it is simply not encouraging that these defeats, as in Loc Ninh, have to be inflicted day after day on the same small unit or month after month and year after year on the same larger unit.

So the second premise that the big unit war is going away is very dubious. Now, let us suppose that should be accomplished. That is a very large supposition, given their ability to move people across the DMZ, given their ability to mass people in Cambodia and Laos, as they have been doing, posing an invasion threat or a reinforcement threat which virtually compelled us to divert forces to deal with them. I remember when the DMZ threat broke out, the unit that was called for to go up there and take care of that threat was called away from an operation in Tay Ninh, an exploration of Zone C. Likewise, the

operations in the DMZ had the effect of drawing U.S. Marine forces almost entirely away from pressure on the local guerrillas, their pacification effort. Nevertheless, supposing that this is accomplished, and that either by bringing in more forces or by diverting, by being able to reallocate forces to the guerrilla threat, what kind of progress do we see on that score? There are various alternative ways to pacify, to regain control, to destroy the VC guerrilla forces. I have in effect dealt with two ways. One way is removing the cover of the big unit forces, which I would say is not adequate. Another would be by attacking their morale in general or their control from Hanoi, by simply destroying bodies, by pressure, by the strategy of attrition. Bill, I think, has suggested to you one of the great troubles with an attrition strategy as a strategy right now which is that, given their guerrilla tactics and their support by guerrilla units, they are able to pick the time and place pretty well of their engagement.

We are not having great success in bringing them to battle; on the contrary, the casualties they suffer are scored typically in incidents like the "meeting engagement" which Alsop described, in which they were lying in wait for us, or on the other hand in their attacks upon units or bases, as in Loc Ninh. That suggests immediately that whether they like those casualties or not, those casualties are subject to their choice and to their control; and if they decide to cut them down they can stop attacking Loc Ninh, and they can stop going into areas where, as Alsop puts it, "they had no business to be."

They can stay in the remote vastnesses that Alsop's informants regard as their proper, allotted areas. In other words, whenever this pressure of attrition became psychologically unbearable, they can simply relieve themselves of it. Again, their ability to do this, as I keep saying, depends very much on their ability to utilize intelligence and supplies from a broadly based population all over the country, which in turn gives them the ability to live in a fairly dispersed fashion, either in remote areas or in populated areas. Above all, it relies on their ability to keep the population among whom they move and on whom they rely from betraying information about their movement. This,

of course, in an area where we can bring force to bear very quickly by artillery or air or men in choppers, is absolutely vital to them. They could not survive in such an area if we could get timely information. So a little more food for thought to add to the food for thought that Alsop gives us this morning is why he is not able to report that the ambush waiting for Terry Allen, which was, he said, in a populated area (that may be an exaggeration, I haven't checked exactly where it was; but at least it wasn't Zone D) was not preceded by any warning to our troops, from anybody. Nor was the fact of the move of the battalion. And these battalions do not move invisibly to the Vietnamese. They move invisibly to us, which is an essential factor of their security. Their control or influence of the population, whether it is willing or not, effectively gives them what amounts to cover of darkness to move in. In this case, they seemed to know that the battalion of our division was moving; so we didn't have that advantage. I see in the paper here that Loc Ninh started when a Viet Cong soldier joined the end of an ambush patrol coming in for the nights and either got inside the camp or got near the camp (I haven't read a story recently of an ARVN soldier doing that to a VC ambush patrol); but the battle opened with 4,000 VC troops in the vicinity of the camp, again with no warning. This gives me a great deal of food for thought about the way the course of the war is perceived by the Vietnamese in that area; who aren't misled by The New York Times, no doubt, but neither are they cheered, of course, by Alsop, which may be a problem.

With the exception of the immediate operating area of U.S. units, I know of almost no area in the country that can be said to have been cleared, as the word is used technically, of VC local forces, meaning companies or provincial battalions. I know of no province that was subject previously to attack by district companies or provincial battalions that is no longer subject to that. The area in Binh Dinh, one of the few areas where Communist control can be said to have been rolled back (Phu Yin used to be another) is so by virtue of the fact that there is something like 55,000 troops, cadre and police in that

immediate area -- a tremendous saturation of a very small area. In that immediate area, to be sure, you do get security; you can move at night, in fact, in those villages. Do you have, however, "pacification" in the sense that those troops could be thinned out or removed and the VC would not be able effectively to operate? I don't think so; people who know the area do not think that is the case. Certainly, there is almost nothing else in the country that can be described as "cleared," let alone "pacified." The exceptions are certain Hoa Hao areas, as in An Giang and parts of other provinces, and some Cao Dai, Catholic or Cambodian areas. Apart from these, there is hardly a district in the country that is not subject to attack by VC district companies, or even provincial battalions. And these are not main force units, they are not North Vietnamese units, they do not go away when main force units are destroyed. Given that presence, you then have a VC threat in the area that can overthrow the Vietnamese regional force companies, or the smaller and weaker popular forces, let alone RD Cadres. To think, in other words, of protecting the population from these attacks -- and I am stressing now the military side of the problem, which is by no means all of it -- to think of protecting people from these attacks with RF companies, or PF platoons or RD Cadres, is simply dreaming. Those VC companies are too strong, they operate too well. And they are there: they are not going away.

The only thing that could take care of them, could match them, would be ARVN battalions or U.S. battalions, in each case operating for a long time in that area and operating appropriately. The VC so far has succeeded in keeping us from devoting many U.S. battalions for a long time to a given area in this role. The necessity to meet the larger-unit threats elsewhere has always diverted those U.S. units at critical moments from that assignment; a given unit has never spent too long at it. Will the U.S. units ever effectively confront this threat? Again, I think you have to look at some of the tactical requirements of the problem. To meet those VC companies -- which are local, local boys on the whole, which are well tied in with the population, which have lived in that area for a long time -- takes a number of things. It takes effective small unit actions, especially at night,

ambush on routes where the VC are known to go, daytime patrols all over the place, nighttime patrols in some areas. It takes ability to back up contact very rapidly, to destroy units which you may meet. It takes very close coordination with local intelligence, and preferably unit knowledge of that area. Indeed, the Vietnamese whom I most trust on this subject of counter-guerrilla fighting tend to believe that even ARVN compared to local PF and RF and village militia, is incapable of meeting the guerrilla threat effectively, coming from outside the local area, even if ARVN were much better than it is. And by the same token, the U.S. units, they feel, would be even less effective because of the importance of the ability to utilize local intelligence, to tie in with relatives, with families, with district chiefs of police, to establish rapport with villagers and learn from them (it is very helpful to know the language), to recognize outsiders to the area -- (something that Popular Forces can do). Popular Forces, in particular, can recognize suspicious phenomena in various ways. Our troops who have operated with them get the feeling that they're smelling VC; they're utilizing clues that are useful only to those who know local patterns. To give one example, I was with Marines in a Combined Action Platoon who were really astounded by the ability of the PFs who were with them to "smell VC," as they said, and they really didn't know how they were doing it. I asked the PFs through an interpreter some of the things that they watched for, and they gave an example from the previous night; they had been in a hamlet where it was just too quiet, which meant that someone had silenced the village dogs, either muzzled them or had driven them away to preserve silence; which told them that there were VC in the area. Again, a unit that I was on patrol with drew attention to the fact that there was too little light appearing from some houses that we were moving among. This kind of thing is just not easily to be picked up by American troops; even good ARVN troops, from a different part of the country, would not be ideal for this. In any case, you do not have ideal ARVN troops to do it.

As I have already suggested, it would be difficult to imagine putting U.S. troops in an area where they can operate in this fashion for a long time; "rooting out" the guerrillas, setting ambushes, killing them one at a time, two at a time, five at a time; taking casualties both from mines and guerrillas, one at a time, five at a time, in a way that adds up very quickly; and operating in small units in a way that subjects some U.S. squads or platoons on a statistical basis to being nearly wiped out. That's the way to meet the guerrilla enemy; it's the way to find him and the way to attack him, but it subjects U.S. units to television coverage from you people of a kind to which they're very sensitive.

As for ARVN, I will say as flat propositions: ARVN does not fight at night; ARVN does not operate in offensive small unit patrols; ARVN does not put out offensive ambushes. I'm talking here not about  Marines or Airborne (and even they don't provide too many exceptions to these particular propositions, though they often fight well offensively) but about the regular battalions of the ten ARVN divisions. There are exceptions even among these. But not very many. As for the change in ARVN deployment that was announced about a year ago, that a lot of ARVN battalions were going to be assigned to supporting revolutionary development; at first glance to a lot of us who felt that this was a crucial problem, this looked very good. And then we saw it in practice; we went out on the ground, spent nights with these people and saw what they were in fact doing. True, they had been shifted away from their assigned role against the main force units, which by and large with the exception of certain units like their airborne and Marines, they did not destroy the provincial guerrillas -- the crucial job had to be done by somebody and could not be done by the U.S. forces available then or now, or by RF or PF -- but rather to support RD by surrounding a hamlet or a village, digging in, as we saw in many cases, right next to the hamlet, putting out not patrols, not ambushes, but listening posts fifty yards out from the position (which is what a reported "small unit night action" really is in Vietnam).

In short, they were not acting as effective anti-guerrilla forces. They were taking over the role previously performed by popular forces, not even by regional forces. Their doing this did suggest that in certain hamlets in Vietnam one would see progress because you would have increased security. You now had in effect a battalion of well-armed PFs guarding that hamlet for the RD crew. But this was being done at the cost of failing still to address the problem that VC district companies and provincial battalions were wandering unchallenged in that area.

There are many problems and many obstacles to real success. Failure is overdetermined in Vietnam. Certainly if this one problem were handled in some way, either by 500,000 or a million more U.S. troops or by a really radical change in performance in ARVN, even that certainly would not guarantee that there would not be failure elsewhere in the system that would still deny us any real progress. But while you have this military situation, while the VC have the night to themselves, that is sufficient for lack of progress in pacification: a lack of progress that I think must be predicted to continue for this year and for the foreseeable future, by which I mean the planning period, six months or a year (and I would be willing to say much further than that). I believe that the solution in the end cannot be the substitution of U.S. forces for RVNAF forces in this crucial role. I have suggested some of the reasons, and there are two other big reasons -- it is very unlikely, I think, that the U.S. public would put up with the numbers and the time that would be required. And the Vietnamese public cannot, I think, be led to believe that the U.S. will stay forever. So long as they expect U.S. forces to leave eventually, the question that is crucial in their minds is: What then will be the result of the final confrontation between ARVN and GVN and the VC?

They do not believe, nor do I believe, what when the U.S. forces go, whenever that is, the VC will have been destroyed. There still will be organized VC. Will the remaining job, then, of dealing with those reduced VC, be what Rusk sometimes describes rather lightheartedly as an "easy task?" Not with the RVNAF that you have now; it would

be infeasible for them now to deal with a reduced VC threat any more than they were able to deal with a smaller VC threat in the past. And they are not moving currently in a direction that would enable them to do it. So long then, I think, as the Vietnamese look at the crucial indicators of GVN and RVNAF ability and conclude that GVN forces could not themselves take out those guerrillas and infrastructure, they see the VC winning in the end. And that keeps them from the kind of commitment, kind of risk-taking for the GVN cause, that would lead to a decisive change in the tactical situation. Until the Vietnamese peasants come to participate, come to take risks, come in effect to be mobilized by the GVN on the GVN side, not as civilians but as participants in the war who risk their lives to give information of ambushes, to tell who is in local VC units and where they are to the police: not 'til then will there be a definitive change, a really decisive or lasting change in that picture. It could happen.

But policy choices on things that we're not taking up this morning on larger issues of negotiation, whether we should grasp or avoid negotiation, questions of how long the war will take, how much the U.S. public should be asked to bear, and so forth, depend not only on an assertion of what the problem is and what the alternative and the possibilities for improvement are (and I think there are possibilities for improvement, both politically and in the military sphere I've been talking about). Some of those higher policy choices also require a judgment as to whether those opportunities for improvement in the Vietnamese military and political areas will, in fact, be grasped. The President needs to know, and I think the public needs to know: What are the odds that the situation, all things considered (including U.S. policy and its implementation) will be better a year from now. And this requires, in part, a bet on how the U.S. will use its influence and whether it will use it more effectively than in the past. It might. I bet against that now; not just on past performance, but on my reading of what is going on there now. We were talking earlier about what might be called Alsop's fables. His predecessor Aesop had a line, "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong;" and Damon

Runyon added to that, "but that's the way to bet." Unfortunately, I am afraid that in the Vietnam case that may not be the way to bet.

I think it may well turn out that the race there will go to the slow and patient, and the battle, in the end, to the weak. I hope that's not ture.

true

NOVEMBER 3

(Question and Answer)

Dr. Ellsberg, Professors: Kaufmann, Pool, Yarmolinsky

(BEGINNING OF TAPE VERY FAINT - Microphones not yet on)

Question: ...this afternoon you didn't elaborate on the slight criticism of television coverage of the Vietnam war.

DR. ELLSBERG: That was a quote from Alsop.

PROF. YARMOLINSKY: Dan, do you want to comment on the quality.

DR. ELLSBERG: No, that was just a misunderstanding. I was quoting Alsop sardonically. As a matter of fact, I could comment on some interesting phenomena, having spent two years in Vietnam, not seeing television coverage of the war, now that I've come back.

There's no question that there is a vividness to the war for the public that is unattainable in Saigon, or even in Vietnam, as a regular thing, unless you happen to be a Horst ^{Fans} who travels around with combat units all the time. And that affects one's attitude toward the war to such an extent that, as I read letters from my friends in Saigon, I find that differences have arisen between us on policy and seems to me to reflect the fact that I am now exposed to what seems to me to be excellent television coverage, which I didn't get in Vietnam and which they have not seen.

PROF. YARMOLINSKY: I wonder if Ithiel Pool wants to comment as an expert on the issue of television, the impact of television, on that question.

DR. POOL: I don't really have much to add. I agree completely with Dan. I've been saying for some time that the war seems much closer here than it does when you are in Saigon. And it certainly is one of the things

that accounts for the public reaction. This is the first time we've lived through a war of this kind, and the public's intense reactions are undoubtedly very largely due to the television availability.

Question: Dr., I will try to remember your quote this morning, but you will understand that we heard a lot of things and maybe my notes are mistaken. I recall you were saying that the Viet Cong and -- are getting stronger in the areas they control and there is very little of the country not under effective Viet Cong control.

DR. ELLSBERG: That must have been someone else. I didn't say anything like that.

DR. POOL: I didn't say that. I said that the growth in the government control, growth in the government percentage of the population, was large-- due to movement in the government areas, rather than to the government control spreading geographically in terms of acreage. I said that the Viet Cong is becoming less popular. And I started to say and then corrected myself that the government was becoming more popular, changed it to the statement that the Viet Cong was becoming less popular. So I clearly didn't say that the Viet Cong was becoming stronger.

Question: I have a comment and a question. I notice before that we were limiting in our discussion of informing the public to television. Such a good part of the representation here is from the radio; I would just like the record (interrupted by laughter) that radio also plays a part in that, and an important part. The question I had was this. We've been told that the national security of the United States is at stake in Vietnam. I'd be interested to hear some comment on whether the national security of

of Japan is at stake.

PROF. YARMOLINSKY: May I respond to that, Bill. It seems to me that the crucial difference between the situation of Japan admittedly the third economic power in the world, not yet a significant military power, but likely to be one again. The difference between the situation of Japan vis-à-vis Vietnam and the situation of the United States is that the United States has committed its power and its prestige to the position that we have taken in Vietnam, and Japan has not done so. If we had not committed ourselves to the situation in Vietnam, our national security would not be at stake.

PROF. KAUFMANN: I'd like to add to that a little bit, if I may. As far as Japan is concerned, about a third of its external trade, exports and imports (forgive me always for playing with numbers) is with southeast Asia, including Hong Kong, and of course what would happen there would depend very critically upon whether it had access to the market after a change whatever that change might be. In this connection, I think it's of some relevance that Ho Chi Minh who, after all, is 77 years old and at least by my standards rather an old man, but by European standards rather a young man, was brought up, trained as, and the agent of the Communist party for Indochina, and as far as one can judge has thought of himself as not just a Vietnamese, but as a Laotian, a Cambodian, and maybe even a Thai. I think we may, and this is one of the large uncertainties that we always deal with in these situations, we may be dealing quite independently of the Soviet Union and China, with somebody, whether it is Ho Chi Minh or his successors and by sort of Adenauer standards, he's got at least 13 more years to go, we may be dealing with somebody with really quite

substantial ambitions and expectations. It's frequently said that we shouldn't look on him as an Asian Tito. Tito really was kind of a nasty fellow for awhile, until the collapse of his relationships with the Soviet Union, and thereafter the collapse of his support for the rebellion in Greece, but that's a footnote. I don't think we can assume that this is just Vietnam. It may be something quite more substantial than that. Beyond that, and I come back to the US and Japan, I think it's enormously difficult for a country like the United States, with the resources at its command, with its peculiar and very fortunate geographic position, to define what constitutes its vital interests. China, after all, did gobble up Tibet, which a lot of us thought for a long time was not part of China. For a variety of intuitive reasons which were probably good, we thought we shouldn't intervene to prevent the seizure of Tibet. Somewhat more troublesome, we didn't intervene about Hungary in 1956. Where the United States draws the line, given its great resources, is a very difficult, and I suspect, rather an arbitrary matter. Whether in retrospect one ought to have drawn the line in Vietnam, I think is very much an arguable matter. But it did get drawn and I defy anybody to say where, right now, is the better line to draw.

Question: Dr. Yarmolinsky, this is a question that bothered me during this whole series and perhaps I'm out of date with the times; if so perhaps confirm it for me. Initially, I have assumed that our foreign policy is established and enunciated by the Executive Department and the State Department, and that the military is the arm which enforces and carries out our foreign policy. I would feel much more comfortable if I thought you gentlemen had more association with the State Department than with the Defense Department. Are you gentlemen enunciating policy now for the Defense Department?

PROF. KAUFMANN: (Restatement of question). Are we hearing policy from the Defense Department, good God, or is anybody here representing the Department of State, or if not...

QUESTIONER: ...or identified with it in your extra-curricular..give me your advice. None of you seem to have been attached in any way with the Department of State. It has been the Department of Defense, and I am questioning the Department of Defense making our foreign policy and, if so, to what degree.

PROF. KAUFMANN: Dan, may I just register the question. Are any of us gentlemen who appear to be all associated with the Department of Defense registering policy as expressed by the Department of State.

QUESTIONER: I'm not saying you gentlemen are expressing it. I'm asking is the Defense Department expressing foreign policy. The fact that you are here perhaps is incidental. But I seem to get the impression that much of what we are hearing is the expression of the Department of Defense.

PROF. KAUFMANN: Is the Department of Defense expressing policy?

PROF. YARMOLINSKY: Let me make three points. First, anything you've heard from me in the course of the last 12 hours - I guess it is 12 hours, 13 hours -- is my opinion. The opinion of Adam Yarmolinsky, boy analyst. One of the particularly acute pleasures, which makes up for some of the pains of departing Washington, is that when you speak, you can speak for yourself. I'm a consultant to the Department of Defense; I'm a consultant to the Department of Housing and Urban Development; I'm a consultant to the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. And I can't keep track of all outfits I'm a consultant to. But fortunately

no outfit that I consult with tells me what to think. If they did, all I need to do is say I'm sorry, I'm not going to consult for you anymore. So, speaking for myself, and I believe speaking with the other members of the panel, what we say is what each of us thinks. Now, it....No, not at all, sir. Perhaps I began with the emphasis on the least important part of your question. But I want to go on to address what I am sure is properly the more important part of your question. It happens that the three of us here have been-in the past have been- rather closely associated with the Department of Defense. The Department of Defense, I think it is fair to say, at least in the period that I've been intimately acquainted with it, has done, and I imply no criticism of the Department of State, but I think has done a little better job of following the line of policy set for it by its leader who in turn expresses the policy of the White House and the President of the United States than perhaps has been done by other Departments concerned with international security affairs.

Question: You're saying the State Department has been bypassed in these

PROF. YARMOLINSKY: No, I'm not saying that at all, sir. If that's the way you read me I'm not making myself clear the least bit. The policy of the United States is determined by the President of the United States, and through two Presidents I've seen it determined, and I know who decides the foreign policy of the United States. It isn't the Secretary of Defense, it isn't the Secretary of State, it's the President. And whenever there is a question important enough to come to his attention, he is the one who makes a decision. And whenever there is a conflict of opinion between the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State, and this occurs, at least has occurred in my experience, very rarely, those conflicts are decided by the President and not by either Department overriding the other. Now the Department of Defense is kind of convenient, particularly, I suppose, for newsmen who are concerned with vivid symbols to talk about the Pentagon. After all, there's only one building in the United States that has five sides, at least that I know of. And one tends to think of it as a kind of symbol of authority. It's very big, it's got lots of people in it and there's all kinds of brass and shining metal around, and it's got a lot of money. The Pentagon doesn't decide anything. There are people in the Pentagon who make decisions as to whether a particular sum of money is spent in one direction or other within the Defense Department budget. But when it comes to questions of policy, the decisions are made by the President of the United States, or by the Secretary of Defense, who, among his many virtues, I think numbers among the most important, the ability to follow the line that is set for him by his leader.

Now, I think this is equally true of the Secretary of State, and I have been impressed by the extent to which the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State see eye to eye, but I think it is just not in any representation of reality as it has existed at least since 1961, which is the only period I can speak for, to suggest that in any way THE Pentagon, this odd five-sided monster, has overruled or been dominant over, paramount even, in advising the President of the United States on questions of foreign policy.

Question: Would you not say it's influential?

PROF. YARMOLINSKI: I would say that it doesn't exist in this sphere.

Question: I speak of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, sir.

PROF. YARMOLINSKI: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, I am convinced, today, as in 1961, are consulted for their knowledge which is extremely valuable, for their experience, but they are experts in the principle that the expert is on tap but not on top/^{that}prevails today as it did on January twentieth, 1961.

Question: Do any of you see any new statement of policy of Ambassador Goldberg's statement as quoted in this morning's paper, or do all of you see it as restatement of old policy?

PROF. KAUFMANN: Does anybody see the statement of Ambassador Goldberg this morning as a restatement of policy, or as a new statement of policy?

PROF. YARMOLINSKI: I think it would be giving in to the kind of caricature that Scotty Reston was describing in his column this morning. He was saying that our policy never changes, we're just enunciating and refining wisdom. Sure, it's a change of policy. But I don't think it's a

big change of policy. I think it's a small step. I think it's a step taken belatedly. I think it's a recognition of a fact that would have been a fact if we had gotten to the bargaining table six months ago or sixteen months ago. But I think it does represent some shift in our position.

Question: Would any of you gentlemen like to comment on the problem, if any, which arises from the fact that we are an Occidental nation fighting a war in an Oriental country -- a problem of racism.

PROF. KAUFMANN: Is there a problem for an Occidental nation fighting in an Oriental contest?

PROF. POOL: There are many. There is the problem at home in that respect. There is the problem throughout southeast Asia. There is the problem in Vietnam itself. I think that this is not, in my experience, the way in which Vietnamese conceptualize the problem. They don't like foreigners. They're not necessarily more friendly toward Koreans because they're Oriental, than they are towards Americans. Americans represent, in some ways, more favorable things -- more power, more prestige, more responsibility in the world. There is very little Asian identification of a regional character in most Asian countries.

Question: There is no antiwhite feeling?

PROF. POOL: I would think it would be better defined not racially but as anticolonial, antiWestern, antipower. Probably a great many Vietnamese, there is a wide variety of attitudes, but a great many Vietnamese would probably prefer to think of themselves as highly cultured and educated, and in that sense, Western, as contrasted to other Asians, so that they'd have very mixed feelings.

Question: Dr. Ellsberg, you mentioned this morning, after painting a rather futile picture that you might this evening have suggestions of a possible direction that would either lead us toward a better conclusion -- or a hope for winning the war. Would you care to comment on that question?

PROF. KAUFMANN: Any suggestions from Ellsberg on how to win the war.

DR. ELLSBERG: The shortcomings ... well, I would put it in two categories. When I'm asked just to speak on Vietnam, having come back, I have in a short time to pick priorities as to what's most relevant, most fundamental, or what most needs saying in the context of other public discussion. I tend, I find, not to talk about the subject I talked about today, which I regard as not the most fundamental phenomenon, but rather to emphasize the factor of politics in general. Now, in a way, it's a relief to have a somewhat more limited subject, as I had today, the military situation. Let me take this opportunity to say that what I was talking about today reflected my two years in Vietnam which were in the Department of State, not the Department of Defense, if that wasn't clear.

I reported to Bill Bundy and I can assure you he's heard everything, ad nauseum, that you heard today from me, on various visits to Vietnam. So in answer to your question, I could speak at some length either on: what could be done to improve the military performance, or what I think is more fundamental and perhaps a prerequisite, how to improve the political situation. Let me just summarize as briefly as possible. We've come to the end of the schedule here. To tie in with my talk today, I'll comment just on the military.

You have the fact that the ARVN soldiers are by all accounts and by most observation good military material to work with, as good as the VC soldier -- which is very good. They're the brothers of the VC soldier and the cousins of the VC soldier. They don't come from different regions, they come from the same families, to a large extent. The same villages certainly. They are the same people. They both fight very well when they are well led. The VC are very much

better led than the ARVN soldiers. And this comes from a lot of reasons having to do with the recruitment of officers and NCO's, the selection of officers, the promotion of officers within the system.

I think that we have failed over thirteen years during which MACV has commented year after year on the problem to improve ARVN leadership and officership. We have failed to zero in on this as the target of our advisory influence; nor has the GVN really targeted on this, as the problem to be changed. We've deplored the lack of good officers all this time; yet I think the gestures that are made in the direction of improving the selection and promotion and training and motivation and supervision of officers. And this is something that's always been possible, but it's something to which we've never really turned our attention.

In this respect, though, as in the political, I think that we have often followed a pattern of dispairing of exerting influence at the top level and trying to exert influence by training or advisory influence or whatever at the lowest level. This just doesn't work. The man at the bottom, whether he's civil or military, is looking over his shoulder at his superior, and the guidance, or lack of guidance or example, that he gets from that man is infinitely more influential on his behavior than an advisor or training can be. Therefore, in the military, as in the civil sphere, I think reform of ARVN is essential. I think it is feasible. I think that suitable officers both in the civil and military side exist. This is something that you do not learn in the first six months in Vietnam; but I think those of you who have been there longer realize that after a year or more, you begin to realize the strengths that are available there in terms of potential leadership, but that are not being used in command positions.

The basic impression I gave today of ARVN inadequacy, which I certainly would stand by, I cannot expect will be improved so long as the division commanders and the corps commanders remain, by and large, who they are. When I hear of MACV programs, of the kind we've had year after year for ten to thirteen years, to improve the performance, but I

do not hear of these division commanders changing or regimental commanders, or corps commanders, it's impossible for me to believe that there will be real improvement if that performance.

Can those commanders be changed? First of all, are there more capable commanders? Yes, I have absolutely no doubt of that -- from the testimony that I've heard. Is U.S. influence there enough to effect a change of commanders, to effect a change in the system? I cannot believe that it isn't.

Now, let me make a comment on what I think is a more fundamental problem. And it's not one that one can deal with too easily. It's the problem of motivation. Again, what I cannot offer are panaceas, measures that would be sufficient for success, that would guarantee success. But I can identify factors that I think are necessary to success and that could be effective. It is not clear that we can offer leadership to the country of a political sort equivalent in nationalistic credentials to Ho Chi Minh; nor can we see many or charismatic leaders; but it is not necessary to offend against the nationalistic cultural and regional sympathies and sentiments of the Vietnamese people to the extent we have, in the nature of the leadership that we've supported. It is not essential to have leadership that in the past could be characterized by and large as Northern generals or Central Vietnamese generals, as opposed to Southern civilians who fought the French (instead of fighting for the French, like these generals we have supported).

I think that one could move in that direction, and right now, if you talk policy. I think the most hopeful thing that I see on that scene, really far more hopeful than anything I could have reported, say six months ago is the existence and nature of the National Assembly, and particularly the lower house. I do not feel the election had any significant effect in changing people's attitudes or legitimizing Thieu and Ky, particularly. The existence of that House -- not so much the fact that they were elected but the fact of who they are and their potential role in the government -- is something really new in that society. I think there are a lot of people in both houses,

especially the lower house, who really are representative of regions and factions, and of popular sympathies, and I think it's available to us to back that institution as a genuinely Vietnamese representative institution out of which influential leadership could emerge, that could change the nature of the government. If the Prime Minister, not the first one but the second one, should be one basically acceptable to the Assembly, and the Cabinet likewise, as opposed to being instruments compatible with the Northern and Central generals, I think that we could have a government of a sort that we have not seen over there before. The ultimate objective, which I think is prerequisite to any kind of progress and, I think, is achievable with changed U.S. policy is a government that is changed in its character and its image to the people and its capability to provide leadership and to reform the administrative structure, and thus can provide nationalistic alternatives of a sort that have not existed in the last several years, to the cohesive and nationalistic minority faction of the Viet Cong. This I think would be a basis for genuine progress. But I think, regretfully, that the drift of U.S. policy is not in that direction. If you ask, could it be in that direction? I would say yes.

PROF. YARMOLINSKY: May I just add a word? It seems to me that at least some of the blame, if you want to call it blame, for getting us where we are today, must be laid to a kind of spirit that moved the government of the United States when I for one joined it in January 1961, and I think I can say this because I was moved by the same spirit. I think the notion that, there was a sentence in the Kennedy inaugural that said no burden is too heavy, no problem is too hard, I can't remember the wonderful ringing phrases, but the general notion was that problems were there to be solved. We can take on these burdens. And I suspect that if we went wrong, and my own view, as you've probably gathered, is that we did go wrong somewhere down the line here, if we went wrong, we went wrong because we thought, well, it's just a little country, there are only a few million people there, and if we just work at it hard enough, we can stiffen their backbones. They, with our help, can work themselves out of the situation that they've gotten into.

Well, it seems to me that we did not sufficiently examine what resources were available to us to work with, how far we would have assumed burdens which it was not ours to assume and which by assuming we, in effect, removed burdens from the people themselves, people of the country themselves, who had to take the burden if it was to be carried forward, and therefore, by our own -- optimism is not the word perhaps -- but by our willing to work at it hard enough, we may have dug the hole in which we now find ourselves trying to climb out of.

MR. KALB: I have a feeling our time is up. I didn't want to ask a question, I just wanted to make a statement. You've given us many ideas and we'll undoubtedly be kicking this stuff around on the air for a long time to come. For myself, I just want to thank you all very much.